

Aluminum Siding

BASICS:

Maintaining Aluminum Siding

Steps to ensure it looks nice and lasts a long time:

Clean the siding once a year and repaint it as necessary. It might be time to repaint your aluminum siding when you notice chalking, or oxidation, which is the result of weathering. Chalking isn't preventable on aluminum siding, but it can be removed.

Cleaning aluminum siding

A good hose or pressure washer can make your aluminum siding look like new if you tend to it annually. Mix together 1/3 of a cup of laundry detergent with six gallons of water and you've got yourself a cleaning solution that will wash away most dirt and grime. When using a pressure washer, though, make sure you're using low pressure or the aluminum will dent. Using a soft-bristled brush, clean the siding well, and then rinse off.

Painting aluminum siding:

- Aluminum siding should be sanded with a fine-grit paper.
- Use a metal primer.
- Spray painting offers the best results. If necessary, patch your aluminum with filler especially made for metal.
- Aluminum, while it does offer the benefit of better insulation than vinyl, does dent. Pushing the damaged part out can fix some dents, but in other cases, the panel needs to be replaced and typically, the panels above and below the damage are replaced also.

LONG TERM GRIME/STAINS:

Steve Thomas (This Old House): Exposure to sun, pollution, and the elements can turn siding chalky, faded, and porous, allowing dirt and mildew to penetrate the surface. I would try pressure washing, first with straight water on low pressure. If that's not getting the job done, do a test wash at high pressure in a place that's not highly visible. Some pressure washers develop pressure great enough to break a 2x4, and the last thing you want is to damage siding with high pressure. Then try scrubbing it with a biodegradable detergent or trisodium phosphate and hosing down with a low-pressure spray.

*If power washing does not work, then you need to consider painting or replacing the siding. Painting aluminum siding is labor intensive since it must be carefully sanded and primed with metal primer before painting.